



SOME APPRECIATIVE
REVIEWS OF "THE SE-
CRET OF HEROISM," A
MEMOIR OF HENRY
ALBERT HARPER BY
MR. W. L. MACKENZIE KING, C. M. G.



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(Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister of Canada, in a speech to the students of the University of Toronto, February 19, 1906.—The Globe, February 19, 1906.)

“Gentlemen—Some weeks ago in the city of Ottawa, in one of the principal thoroughfares, we erected a monument to a student of Toronto University. The name of Albert Harper and the fame of Albert Harper will live in bronze forever, but I believe they will more endure in the hearts of the Canadian people. (Cheers.) And if I have a parting word to tell you it will simply be this: ‘That in the life and death of Albert Harper, student and pupil of the University of Toronto, you have an example worthy of ambition by the pupils of Toronto University.’ ”

The Secret of Heroism

A MEMOIR OF HENRY ALBERT HARPER

BY W. L. MACKENZIE KING, C. M. G.

Rev. Charles W. Gordon, D.D. (Ralph Connor).

Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King has done a fine thing in his little commemorative volume entitled, "The Secret of Heroism." The book is a tribute to a friend, but it is far more than this; it is a tribute to a type of character too rare in this day of commercial ambitions and material life-aims. Mr. Mackenzie King has written of his friend with admirable reserve and has saved himself from a fault into which he might easily have fallen, of viewing the act of heroism in which his friend gave his life out of proportion. The heroic act of Mr. Henry Albert Harper's tragic death is one that has often been paralleled in the history of our country, but Mr. Mackenzie King rightly seizes as the motive of his book, not the heroic deed itself, but the fact that the deed was a part of a life devoted to the attaining of high ideals. The selections from Mr. Harper's letters are exceedingly well chosen for Mr. Mackenzie King's purpose, which is to let us look into that world of beautiful things, his friend's mind and heart. The account of the death of his father and mother is one of singular pathos and beauty. This book will make any man better for reading it, and Mr. Mackenzie King has done all young Canadians a good service in contributing this book to our Canadian literature.

The Outlook, London.

In "The Secret of Heroism," Mr. W. L. Mackenzie King reveals the existence of a deep and healthy idealism animating the thoughtful side of Canadian life and character. Noble thought, expressing itself in a life of earnest endeavour, such is the dominant note of the character revealed by Mr. Mackenzie King's little book. Death by drowning at the early age of twenty-eight, in the attempt to save another life, robbed Canada of a personality in Henry Albert Harper she or any nation could ill afford to lose. The story of his life, told with infinite tact and perception by his greatest friend, himself a distinguished public servant, is a remarkable one. It is the record of character which illuminates these pages and reveals to us what the French in an untranslatable phrase well term *une ame d'elite*.

Readers of this brief memoir will understand readily why his fellow countrymen deemed him worthy of a monument on those heights which crown the federal city of Canada. The statue of Sir Galahad, unveiled by the Governor General in the presence of the highest officials in the land, will speak to future generations of the idealism, the fearlessness, the self-sacrifice of one who in Heine's line was indeed a "Ritter von dem heil'gen Geist"—the true spiritual chivalry of mankind. So long as Canada can number such knights among her sons, the devastating dragons of "boodle" and "graft" will hardly lay waste her lands unchecked and uncombated.

The Herald and Presbyter.

His (Harper's) life was a remarkably pure, noble and manly life. The biography is a call to heroic manhood.

The Spectator, London.

As a rule we dislike the type of book that is written of some young man before promise can ripen into performance, but of such a book as this we have no complaint to make. The subject of it deserves such a memorial, for his youth had not only hope in it, but fulfilment. The man who is prepared to face certain death for a point of honor, when he has the world before him, and is already on the way to distinction can have no uncommon degree of steel and fire in his soul. An act of blind devotion is fine, but far finer is the act which springs from reasoned principles. If for nothing else than the tale of such a death this brief memoir was well worth the writing.

The extracts from his letters show a singularly pure and simple taste, and a maturity of judgment very uncommon in ambitious youth. His whole mind was devoted to the service of his ideal, and when the duty came he gladly relinquished life itself for its sake. In reading these extracts the manner of his death ennobles every line. The reading of this little book disposes to serious reflection. Our ideals are apt to become mere toys of the intellect or imagination with no real bearing upon character. They are to most men less of a gospel than an opinion; less of faith than of a creed, but in the younger nations where life is simpler and horizons are wider it may be that they have more of their ancient power. If Canada has many young men of the stamp of the subject of this memoir, then indeed is the greatness of her destiny assured.

The Times, London.

It is a book which should stir the heart of many a young reader. A chivalrous plunge after a drowning girl certainly claims our admiration. Does it call for a published record of the life of the hero? In this case, unquestionably, yes. The final act of Harper's life was not the most striking thing in it. His friend says not a word too much when he describes that act as "but the sublime expression of the hidden beauty of his real character and soul." Kindred spirits at home will find in this little book encouragement and incentive. They will find that across the sea also there are sons of Empire in whose breasts the contemplation of man and of nature kindles high ideals. If it is true that the idealism of the time when Carlyle preached his gospel of work finds little echo among the younger generation of to-day, if it be true that its interests are frivolous and its aims material, there can be no better corrective than the call of this stirring serious voice from the new world.

Record of Christian Work.

Those who desire a good book for young men will find one in Mackenzie King's "The Secret of Heroism." This is the story of Henry Albert Harper, whose sacrifice in dying for another was a beautiful fruit which might have been looked for here. We do not wonder the Canadian Government has erected a statue of Sir Galahad in his memory, or that Earl Grey counts it a privilege to have unveiled it.

The Standard, London, England.

Messrs. Fleming H. Revell Co. have just published a little book which we would like to see placed within the reach of every lad and young man in England, and in the library of every school in the Empire. "The Secret of Heroism" sets forth in sturdy, virile English as fine and stirring an example of bravery and upright living as the reviewer has handled in many days. The style of the book is good, being simple and direct. This book tells the story of Henry Harper's life, and traces faithfully the gradual development of a stirring character up to that point at which this final act of heroism and self-sacrifice became possible. In half a dozen ways the book is noticeable: upon its own merits, by reason of the brief life and heroic death it commemorates, and by reason of the striking evidence it affords of Canada's unanimity and enthusiasm in appreciation of nobility of character. Here is proof of Canada's fine morale and the sterling soundness of Canada's heart.

The Westminster, Toronto.

The suggestive title well indicates the character of the book. The writer deals with the animating motives in the life of his hero friend, and reveals those lofty ideals and high standards which could have no other resultant than a heroic and unselfish life. The book is ably written and is one which any young man might read with great profit. Indeed the older men cannot read it without feeling a strange and subtle fascination of a pure and heroic soul.

The Westminster Gazette, London.

"The Secret of Heroism," we think, will be read with pleasure and sympathy by many of the people of this country. The Dominion is indeed fortunate if she has many young men in her service who come of this stock, and though Harper laid down his life on the threshold of his career, we may hope that his example will endure. The character which his friend draws and the story which he tells show us how sane and wholesome and serious and strenuous is the life which a young man may lead in a new community. Apart from the deed which it commemorates this little volume is of great interest to some of us in the Old Country. We may look with confidence to young men of this stamp to show the Empire an example of public service and disinterested citizenship.

The Toronto Saturday Night.

Mr. King has accomplished his work delicately and nobly. Serious as its tone must be there is nothing perfunctory or didactic in the chapters which unveil the character of a young student whose everyday trials, whose struggle to "follow the gleam" are manifest on every page. There is an utter absence of the theatrical or the fullsome, just the plain story of a boy who acknowledged failure, who never ceased from endeavouring towards the best, and whose courage never faltered when he saw that duty meant death. The memoir written by his friend is an admirable tribute in form and spirit to one who should not be forgotten.

The Literary Digest, New York.

"The Secret of Heroism" is a remarkably impressive human document. The strength of character revealed, the nobility of soul, the devotion to duty and the love of fellowman all stamp Henry A. Harper's death a loss to his country, as well as those with whom he came into immediate contact. The publishers' description of his life as "an inspiration to manhood" cannot be bettered. On Mr. King's part, it may be added the work discloses not only a genuine sympathy for the twentieth century Sir Galahad, of whom he writes, but a clear insight into many fundamental facts of life and experience.

The Minneapolis Journal.

No one can read "The Secret of Heroism," a memoir of Mr. Harper, without the feeling that the character of the man, regardless of his heroic self-sacrifice, deserved to be commemorated. Mr. Harper was a man of the finest ideals of life, and he was striving manfully to realize his ideals in practice. His biographer has done his work modestly but effectively. He has made a book that offers the young man of these times much needed inspiration.

San Francisco Chronicle.

. . . It is written biographically, yet in such a manner as to show the motives that ruled the brief life of the hero, and that will serve as an inspiration to manhood.

Goldwin Smith, in the Weekly Sun.

It is pleasant to turn from machine politics, salary grabs, and the plumbers' combine, to the portrait of a Canadian youth, not alone, we may hope, in his generation, presented in Mr. Mackenzie King's life of Henry Albert Harper, to whom, when he lost his life in a heroic attempt to save that of another, a monument was erected at Ottawa with a symbolical figure of the type of heroes, Sir Galahad. Harper, like Sir Galahad, had made it the object of his life to win that which is the one course of happiness, as well as of honour, a character truly noble, with pure affections and hearty love of our kind. Heaven send us more Sir Galahads! In this era of party machines, salary grabs and plumbing combines, we sorely need them.

The World, Toronto.

The volume as a whole is a sympathetic tribute, gracefully presented, to the memory of a friend. It is full of manly ideals and embodies a study of the character and career of a young Canadian who died a heroic death, and the secret of whose heroism is revealed in the record of his everyday experience, and in the sidelights thrown upon these by the tender and delicate hand of his biographer. The book appeals in a special way to young men. The youth who is about to face the world or who is looking forward to the college and university, and the student who is passing thence to life's hard battle will find encouragement and strength for the struggle in the story of Harper's career. Not less so will the man who feels the stress and strain of daily work and duty.

The Times, Hamilton, Ont.

The work is a real character etching. It would be well for all students to peruse Mr. King's story with its perfect ideas of the proper uses of literature and life in this tersely told characteristic picture of a short but ideally significant existence; this impersonal revealing of those mysterious sources of human heroism and noble self-sacrifice, where the impulse of a moment is found to have its roots deep down in the influence and nature springs of a man's whole life from the cradle to the grave. It is the true explanation of heroism and character which is the whole key-note of Mr. King's volume. The light thrown on the friendship that existed between the author of the "Secret of Heroism" and the noble friend of whom he writes illuminates an ideal scene in real life. Mr. King's work will live while nobility of soul appeals to those who read.

The Witness, Montreal.

This is not a work about which to discuss trivial points of language and style, but it may be said that it is the work of an able pen, and that in true feeling and moral strength it not only performs the sacred task of a friend, but contains that simple incisiveness which will make the lesson live. The biography is one which should be placed in the hands of every young Canadian and those who wish well of our young men and women cannot do better than see that it is so placed. In innumerable cases it might well be a startling antidote to the sordid and flippant views which too greatly prevail in all of our communities.

The Star, Toronto.

The book teaches this rather common-place age that some very noble friendships still exist between men. The friendship between Harper and his biographer was such a one. In paying this tribute to the dead Mr. King has gathered quite unconsciously some laurels for himself as an earnest teacher of great truths, as a lover of those ideals which comprised the secret of heroism and on which Harper acted. Mr. King has edited Mr. Harper's diary with rare discretion, and has given us such passages as indicate the character and life purposes of its writer. The biographer's moral reflections are quite as valuable as any which appear in the diary.

The Herald, Montreal.

No one can read the memoir of this high-minded young man's too brief life without feeling that "The Secret of Heroism" is no secret to those who live and think as Harper lived and thought. Mr. King has done well in placing before the world these pages, proving as they do what man is prone to forget, that there are going in and out among us brave spirits seeking the ideal and qualifying by daily sacrifice for higher things, perchance, if opportunity offer, of acts of heroism.

The Presbyterian.

This book is rather more than a memorial of this remarkable young man. It is an inspiration to young people to seek the highest ideals.

The Journal, Ottawa.

The record leads to such a satisfactory explanation of Harper's supreme self-sacrifice that Mr. King has done us all a favour by laying his little book before us. Harper has left a record of character building which cannot fail to assist all who read it. Mr. King, whose friendship with Mr. Harper was life-long, and if we judge from this work, of a rare and beautiful intimacy, develops a literary finish in writing which adds a charm to the book.

The Mail and Empire, Toronto.

Never surely did one reach maturity with a stronger and more intense realization of what life and manhood means than did this young Canadian. All through the brief excerpts from his diary and especially in his letters we feel the sense of a grapple with the real essentials of living, tremendous perception of the "values of things" and endless preparation for something greater to come, and underneath all this struggle for attainment he realized that the foundation lay in greatness of character.

The Herald.

"The Secret of Heroism" is a book that is well worth reading because of the spirit of human kindness which pervades its pages. The author's memorial gives not only an account of the public services but many extracts from Harper's writings, which show that he was in every way the stuff of which heroes are made.

The Ontario Churchman, Kingston.

This very interesting and truldelety inspiring work is a fitting accompaniment to the tribute of a nation. Mr. King has not only with literary grace and in the best of good taste built up from the writing of this brave journalist a natural pedestal for the monument of his personal worth, but has given a book that anyone can read with deep interest and lasting impression. The world was stated to be enriched by the valour of Harper's death. It is also the better unmistakeably for his life, and for the good offices of his biographer.

The News, Toronto.

Mr. Mackenzie King's biography makes it evident that a conscious purpose has more to do with the shaping of character than the average student of human nature is, as a rule, prepared to admit. Indeed, "The Secret of Heroism" shows plainly what achievements are possible, not as in this case for the man of conspicuous unlikeness to the rest of the world, but for the ordinary citizen. It leaves with the reader the conviction that instincts and aims such as these are a common heritage.

The United Presbyterian.

The story is of necessity fragmentary, and yet enough is given to warm the heart and inspire the faith in pure, noble manhood. There is good teaching of the Matthew Arnold, Emerson and Carlyle style upon life, truth and beauty. As a wholesome presentation of a high purposed life, and a beautiful "In Memoriam" of a friend, there is only one word.

Baptist Commonwealth.

This volume is issued as an inspiration to manhood and we do not see how it can fail of its purpose if it be read with the attention it deserves, in view of the fine heroism displayed and the noble career of its young hero whose conduct exemplifies the loftiest ideals of life. The story of his life as told by the author, is of deep interest and inspiring suggestiveness, and is worthy of a place in that class of literature which has for its worthy end the incitement and development of vigorous and exalted manhood.

The Globe, Toronto.

We cannot doubt that had Harper lived out his life he would have become a force for good in this country. There is a lesson taught in the grave strenuousness of his life fondly pictured here not less than in his fearless death, and the youth of Canada should find in this fragmentary representation of Harper's thoughts and ideals an inspiration to lofty performance and high achievement.

The Free Press, Ottawa.

Its literary merit assures it a place on the shelves of lovers of books; its strength as an uplifting influence should also create a large demand. One cannot read its pages without feeling the better for so doing.

The Christian Observer.

This book gives an insight into the high ideals of life. In his homeland especially this book will have a place in every home and heart.

The Secret of Heroism

A Memoir of Henry Albert Harper

BY W. L. MAC KENZIE KING, C. M. G.

With Portrait, 12mo, ~~Net 75 Cents~~ Net 1.00
